THE GARDEN CALENDAR.

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through WRC and 39 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, Tuesday, March 24, 1931.

How-Do-You-Do Folks: In a recent Garden Calendar, I alluded briefly to the fact that production costs in vegetable growing are being cut by the use of labor-saving machinery, and by increasing the yields per acre. Here comes a report from Indiana, telling how the Perdue Experiment Station last year organized a Gold Medal Sweet Potato Club, and a thousand-bushel onion club. In addition to these two new clubs, Indiana has two old clubs that have been going strong for a number of years. These are the 400-bushel potato club and the Ten Ton Plus Tomato Club. According to this report, William Lampe of Allen County grew 410 bushels of U. S. No. 1 potatoes on a measured acre, which was the highest yield in the club for 1930. H. G. Koors of Tipton, Indiana, secured more than 23 tons of tomatoes per acre, and had the highest yield of the 1200 members of the Ten Ton Plus Tomato Club. More than 20 per cent of the members, however, secured the coveted ten tons or more. Not so bad when you consider that the average yield of tomatoes grown for canning and manufacturing in the United States for 1930, was about four and one-half tons to the acre.

There is a limit, however, to the profit that may result from big yields, for it has been found that after you reach a certain point the costs mount at a rate that is out of proportion to the increased returns. Up to a certain point, the increased cost is more than offset by the increased yields, but it is the difference between the cost per bushel, or whatever the unit may be, and the selling price that counts. A high average yield of No. 1 grade for the entire area planted is the ideal.

There are many ways of cutting down costs of production as applied to the growing of fruits and vegetables. One of the most important is labor utilization including teams, tractors, general machinery, and men. How many days out of each year do the horses on the fruit or vegetable farm stand in the stable without doing any work. How many days' service a year do you get out of your tractor? What are the men doing rainy days, and how much time on other days is lost because of equipment being in poor repair? Much depends upon the proper selection of equipment, but more depends upon keeping it in good repair and ready for use.

Gardeners who have greenhouses, plant houses, hotbeds, coldframes or pits in which to grow early plants, have a decided advantage over those who do not have these facilities. In spite of the fact that our winter markets are well supplied at all times with fresh vegetables, it is still largely a matter of having crops ready to market early in order to command the highest

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prices. That is why many northern and eastern growers find it profitable to grow several thousand tomato plants under glass and have them ready to bloom and set fruit by the time they can be planted in the open. Peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, melons and other crops are being hastened toward early maturity by this method.

It is indeed wonderful what transplanting will do for early plants. Take tomatoes, for example, as the plants come up in the seed-boxes they are crowded close together, and if left without transplanting they will be spindling and "leggy." In transplanting they can be placed in richer soil than is safe to use for the seedbed, they can be given enough space for uniform development, and they can be set deeper than they were in the seedbed which will cause them to grow stocky. The main point, however, is that each plant be given sufficient root and top space in which to make a healthy growth.

I want to remind fruit growers that many trees, especially apples, will need a moderate application of nitrate of soda, sulphate of ammonia, or some other form of quickly available nitrogen, to start them off in this spring. This is especially important in the regions where the drought was severe last summer and the growth was poor. The time to apply the nitrogen is about two or three weeks in advance of the opening of the blossoms. The amount of nitrate of soda or of sulphate of ammonia to apply will vary with the age of the trees and soil conditions. For young trees, that is, under 7 or 8 years after setting, the amount should normally not exceed 3 pounds per tree, but for older trees the amount may be from 3 to 5 pounds per tree. The quantities of other nitrogen carriers used will depend upon the amount of actual nitrogen they contain. If they contain twice as much nitrogen only one-half as much should be used. Be sure that the nitrate salt is scattered uniformly over a wide area and extending fully 3 feet beyond the tips of the branches.

I want to mention two or three bulletins that may be of special interest to some of you at this season of the year. The first is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1001-F, "Growing Fruit for Home Use." -- Farmers' Bulletin No. 1001-F. Those of you who live in the Great Plains area, should ask for Farmers' Bulletin No. 727-F rather than for 1001-F. It is Farmers' Bulletin 727-F, "Growing Fruit for Home Use in the Great Plains Area.

Perhaps many of you who live south of the Mason & Dixon Line will be interested in getting a copy of Farmers' Bulletin No. 232-F on the "Culture and Uses of Okra." It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 232-F, and it not only tells how to grow okra, which is very much like a cotton plant, but it tells how to select and use the young, tender pods of the okra for making gumbo, and other delicious soups. A dish of good gumbo, made in true creole fashion, is a meal in itself, and just about the best thing ever in the way of wholesome food.
